

CLAIMS

1. A digital television system comprising a decoder and characterised in that the decoder is adapted to display a service menu providing access to at least one of a plurality of channels comprising a channel and a service channel, access to said at least one of a plurality of channels proceeding via at least one subsidiary menu accessed by the service menu.
2. A digital television system as claimed in claim 1 in which access to said at least one of a plurality of channels proceeds via at least a second subsidiary menu accessible via the at least one first subsidiary menu.
3. A digital television system as claimed in claim 1 ~~or 2~~ in which the decoder is adapted to access a service channel at a particular display screen within that service channel in dependence on the option chosen within a subsidiary menu.
4. A digital television system as claimed in ^{claim 1} ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~ in which the decoder is adapted to display the service menu and at least one subsidiary menu superimposed over information transmitted on at least one of a plurality of channels.
5. A digital television system as claimed in claim 4 in which said at least one service menu further comprises regularly updated information broadcast together with the channel information over which the menus are superimposed.
6. A digital television system as claimed in claim 5 further comprising transmission means adapted to broadcast update information for said at least one service menu on substantially all channels and service channels.
7. A digital television system as claimed in ^{claim 1} ~~any of claims 1 to 6~~ further comprising a remote control handset associated with the decoder, the decoder being adapted to display the service menu in response to the touch of a single dedicated key on the

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handset.

8. A digital television system comprising a transmission means for transmitting a plurality of television channels and a decoder for receiving the plurality of channels and characterised in that one channel is used to carry audiovisual information regarding programmes or services available on at least some of the other channels, the decoder being adapted to generate and display interactive messages superimposed over and synchronised with the information regarding said at least some of the other channels.
9. A digital television system as claimed in claim 8 in which the decoder is adapted to change to another channel in response to a positive reply by a user to an interactive message.
10. A digital television system as claimed in claim 8 ~~or 9~~ in which the decoder is further adapted to change to a predetermined display screen of a service channel in response to a positive reply to an interactive message.
11. A digital television system as claimed in ^{claim 8} ~~any of claims 8 to 10~~ in which the decoder is adapted to carry out payment steps in response to a positive reply by a user to an interactive message.
12. A digital television system as claimed in ^{claim 8} ~~any of claims 8 to 11~~ in which the decoder is adapted when tuned to the guide channel to permanently display a service menu providing access to the channels and service channels received by the decoder.
13. A digital television system as claimed in claim 12 in which the decoder is adapted to display the service menu in an inactive form.
14. A digital television system comprising a combination of any of claims 1 to 7 and any of claims 8 to 13.

15. A method of accessing at least one of a plurality of channels comprising a channel and a service channel of a digital television system, said method comprising the steps of:

displaying a service menu;

5 accessing at least one subsidiary menu by the service menu; ~~and~~ *and*

accessing said at least one of a plurality of channels by said at least one subsidiary menu.

10 16. A method as claimed in claim 15 wherein access to said at least one of a plurality of channels proceeds via at least a second subsidiary menu accessible via at least one first subsidiary menu.

15 17. A method as claimed in claim 15 ~~or 16~~ wherein a service channel is accessed at a particular display screen within that service channel in dependence on the option chosen within a subsidiary menu.

20 18. A method as claimed in ^{*claim 15*} ~~any of claims 15 to 17~~ wherein the service menu and at least one subsidiary menu is displayed superimposed over information transmitted on at least one of a plurality of channels.

25 19. A method as claimed in claim 18 wherein said at least one service menu further comprises regularly updated information broadcast together with the channel information over which the menus are superimposed.

30 20. A method as claimed in claim 19 wherein update information for said at least one service menu is broadcast on substantially all channels and service channels.

21. A method as claimed in ^{*claim 15*} ~~any of claims 15 to 20~~ wherein the service menu is displayed in response to the touch of a single dedicated key on a remote control handset.

22. A method of providing information access in a digital television system, said

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method comprising the steps of:

receiving a plurality of television channels, one channel being used to carry audiovisual information regarding one of programmes and services available on at least some of the other channels; and

- 5 generating and displaying interactive messages superimposed over and synchronised with the information regarding said at least some of the other channels.

23. A method as claimed in claim 22 comprising the step of changing to another channel in response to a positive reply by a user to an interactive message.

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24. A method as claimed in claim 22 ~~or 23~~ comprising the step of changing to a predetermined display screen of a service channel in response to a positive reply to an interactive message.

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claim 22
25. A method as claimed in ~~any of claims 22 to 24~~ wherein payment steps are carried out in response to a positive reply by a user to an interactive message.

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claim 22
26. A method as claimed in ~~any of claims 22 to 25~~ wherein a service menu is displayed permanently to provide access to the received channels and service channels.

27. A method as claimed in claim 26 wherein the service menu is displayed in an inactive form.

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28. A digital television system substantially as herein described.

29. A method of accessing ~~at least one of a plurality of channels~~ substantially as herein described.

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30. A method of providing information access in a digital television system substantially as herein described.

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